

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

7389.9
Eq 73
cop 2
Apr. 7, 1960

7488
Civil 24

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Statement by Bruce M. Easton,
Deputy Director, Food and Materials Requirements Division,
Commodity Stabilization Service, Before the Annual
State and Territorial Civil Defense Directors Meeting
Washington, D. C., April 7, 1960

The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has important emergency responsibilities in civil defense and defense mobilization. Many of these responsibilities must be carried out in close cooperation with other Federal agencies, State and local governments, farmers, the food industry generally, and the public.

In this statement particular attention is given to the immediate post-attack period since plans for this period are most difficult to develop.

The National Food Plan, Annex 31, outlines the responsibilities of the Federal government, State and local governments, the food industry, including farmers, and the public, as follows:

1. Federal Government

The Federal Government, under general direction of the President, through the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization, is responsible for direction and coordination of the total national food effort. Its responsibilities include programs affecting the production, processing, storage, and distribution of food. This Federal food responsibility has been delegated by the President to the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

2. State Governments

Each State is responsible for direction and coordination of local government activities affecting the distribution of food at the retail level and such wholesale stocks as are made available by USDA, through prearranged plans, and for mass feeding made necessary as a result of the emergency.

3. Local Governments

Under the guidance and general direction of the State, each political subdivision is responsible for effecting such emergency food distribution or rationing controls as may be necessary at the retail level or its equivalent until a state-wide or nationwide system is established. It is also responsible for any mass feeding necessary within its jurisdiction. Food distributed to consumers, including food used in mass feeding, will be taken only from supplies determined by appropriate Federal, State, or local authorities to be safe for human consumption.

4. Industry

The food industry, including farm producers, and those industries supplying requisites to them are responsible, in cooperation with appropriate government agencies, for planning and executing measures designed (in accordance with the National Plan) to assure a continuing supply of food to the Nation.

5. The Public

Individuals and families are responsible for maintaining personal stocks of food in their homes or shelters, sufficient to meet their needs until other supplies are available. These stocks should be sufficient for at least two weeks following attack.

Perhaps we should consider just what is the role of the Department of Agriculture in civil defense and defense mobilization. First, let us consider the delegations by the President to the Department. These delegations required preparation of national emergency plans and development of preparedness programs covering the following three broad areas:

1. The production, processing, storage and distribution of food.
2. The defense against biological warfare, effects of chemical warfare against crops and livestock, and radiological fallout in these and certain other areas.
3. Prevention and control of fires caused by the effects of enemy attack in rural areas of the United States.

Operation Alert exercises have clearly demonstrated that if an attack should ever occur on this country, it would be necessary and important to utilize the existing structure of government, for there will be no time in which to set up new agencies or organizations to carry out the multitude of problems which will immediately occur. Plans should be made to capitalize and utilize the capability that each Federal Agency has as well as each State government and each local community. We know that all Federal Agencies are not organized alike, and that they are organized to carry out their peacetime responsibilities. In an emergency the responsibilities of some of the Federal Agencies would be substantially changed or enlarged. As we have already enumerated, the responsibilities of the Department in an emergency are fundamentally the same as its peacetime responsibilities -- assuring an adequate supply of food -- protection of crops and livestock -- rural fire defense.

The Department of Agriculture has many regular programs which can easily be converted to emergency use. Regular programs provide the Department with a broad range of authority for administering essential programs in an emergency. Most of you are familiar with these programs, but let me take a moment to review briefly a few of them and show how we plan to convert them to emergency use.

Price-support programs administered through the Commodity Stabilization Service and the Commodity Credit Corporation will be converted in an emergency to incentive programs to encourage essential food production. Inventories accumulated as a result of price-support operations represent a food resource which would be available for emergency use. Experience in acquiring, managing, and disposing of these stocks provides a basis for emergency supply programs. Although many of the current production adjustment programs would require modification in an emergency, they provide experience for emergency production programs.

Market news and agricultural estimates programs of the Agricultural Marketing Service provide basic data on food supplies which would be needed in an emergency. Inspection and grading programs will be used in preventing and detecting contaminants and in providing necessary standardization of products in order to reduce costs and facilitate necessary control measures. The direct distribution and school lunch program provide experience in distribution of foods to those in need and background for evaluation of civilian food requirements. Many of the AMS programs are carried out in cooperation with the States.

The Forest Service administers 188,000,000 acres of National Forests including protection of these areas against fire, disease, and insect infestations. Also, the Forest Service provides assistance and cooperation in the management and protection of State and private forest lands. This experience is the basis for emergency rural fire programs and programs relating to timber production. The rural fire defense program will be carried out in cooperation with the Department of the Interior and with State and local fire authorities.

Programs of Agricultural Research Service relating to plant and animal disease control, carried on in cooperation with States, are being adapted to defense against biological and chemical warfare and fallout hazards as they relate to animals and crops. Research provides us with information that can be utilized to minimize the effects of radioactive fallout on agricultural resources.

Loan programs of the Farmers Home Administration have a relationship to credit assistance which would be needed by farmers in an emergency. The Extension Service's programs lend themselves to farm community counseling in an emergency. The technical competence of the Soil Conservation Service will be utilized in radiation detection in rural areas.

Let us now consider the capability that the Department has and the steps that have been taken to carry out emergency responsibilities assigned to the Department.

To administer its extensive regular programs, the Department has over 70,000 full-time regular employees of whom about 11,000 are in Washington and the balance in the field. In addition to the regular employees, there are 28,000 full-time employees in ASC County offices under special appointments, 9,156 elected county committeemen in 3,052 counties, and 82,335 elected community committeemen in 27,445 communities. The county and

community committeemen are paid by the Department for the days that they work. This represents a built-in capability for the administration of emergency programs.

Organization for defense planning is designed to utilize the broad range of talent existing in the Department. Under Secretary Morse is responsible for all policy determination, and he is Chairman of the Defense Policy Committee. Administrative Assistant Secretary Roberts is responsible for developing the ability of the Department to continue to operate in an emergency, and he is assisted by a Continuity Planning Committee. General coordination of defense planning within the Department is the responsibility of the Food and Materials Requirements Division of the Commodity Stabilization Service.

The Department as a whole is not regionalized, although a few agencies have some regional operations. However, for purposes of liaison with the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization and to provide an operating mechanism in event of an attack which cuts the regions off from higher authority, eight areas or regions have been established to conform to the areas established by OCDM. Currently these are for liaison rather than for program administration and will not affect the normal administrative reporting lines of the various agencies of the Department. They would, however, become operational in event an enemy attack made national direction impossible.

A full-time Regional Liaison Representative of the Department has been designated in each of the eight areas, along with necessary advisory and supporting staff which is used in pre-emergency planning as well as in actual emergency. These Regional Liaison Representatives are located at each of the OCDM regional offices.

While we have a built-in capability at all levels, we believe that immediately following any attack, our local field offices will have to act without waiting for regional or national direction. Both in the food, fire, and biological-chemical warfare areas, actions will have to be taken as the needs arise. Likewise, the local USDA offices will have to help farmers and others to get the supplies they need to meet their needs.

Previous Operation Alert Exercises have demonstrated the interdependence of food and supporting requisites such as manpower, transportation, fuels and energy. Food is a vital survival item and it must be given adequate recognition in the distribution of supplies of these items. They have demonstrated that food programs cannot be confined to survival in the first 30 or 90 days after attack. If adequate attention to growing crops and livestock is not given in this period, we may be able to feed survivors during this 90-day period but we may sacrifice our ability to rebuild our country in the next year or two.

The exercises have shown the importance of clear-cut emergency assignments and delegations of authority at regional, State, and local levels of the Department. They have demonstrated the vital need for training our own

people in emergency actions and developing proper working relationships with State and local governments, food industry, farmers, and the public. As indicated earlier, the Department is in a good position to do these things because it already has a built-in capability which extends all the way to the county and community levels.

Let us now look at food action in immediate post-attack period, should such attack occur.

The individual family should be prepared to feed itself and remain in the family fallout shelter for the initial two-week period following attack. Even the best prepared families will need assistance after home-stored foods have been used, and some families will need help before the two weeks have expired. Families and individuals will obtain assistance through remaining retail outlets as soon as it is safe to be out in the open. Local retail outlets will be aided by the rationing and mass feeding programs administered by local government.

It is emphasized that the USDA will rely heavily on the cooperation of farmers, food processors, and distributors and will utilize government controls only when necessary to supplement the efforts of the food industry.

Whenever it appears that food supplies in local retail channels (plus any wholesale stocks designated for local use) are about to run behind agreed upon requirements, steps will be taken by the local office of USDA to obtain additional food.

Even if communications with other offices are cut off in an emergency, the local office of USDA will have authority to take whatever action is needed to insure the best utilization of commercial supplies at wholesale, processor and farm levels, together with locally-stored government stocks of the Commodity Credit Corporation.

If communications permit and if food supplies from these sources are inadequate, the USDA local office will request assistance from the USDA State office. Through the USDA State office assistance from the USDA at the national level may also be obtained if needed.

USDA will make every effort to provide adequate food to local governments. In carrying out its Federal food responsibilities, the USDA will not withhold or divert from a community food which it needs to meet approved dietary levels. A possible exception would be providing of food needed for the military. A primary aim of the Federal government is to see that all people in all areas are fed as adequately as emergency circumstances permit.

Even in the immediate post-attack period it is not enough to concentrate on the proper distribution of food supplies which exist at time of an attack. It is also important that essential food production and processing be continued at the highest level possible or as needed to meet requirements.

There will be need to see that perishable foods are used first so as to conserve storable products and supplies for future use and for people in those areas where perishable products cannot be used due to fallout contamination.

In all this activity full cooperation and close working relationships will be maintained between Federal, State and local governments and between USDA, the Office of Civil and Defense Mobilization and other Federal agencies which have program responsibility for the supporting materials and services which are so vital to the food program.

USDA will look to State and local governments for assistance in obtaining such essential supporting items as transportation, fuels, energy, and manpower in the immediate post-attack period whenever help cannot be obtained through Federal resource channels.

The plan just outlined is described more fully in the "National Food Plan" which is Annex 31 to the "National Plan for Civil Defense and Defense Mobilization". This plan will serve as a framework within which the following preparedness steps must be taken:

Needed Preparedness Measures

A broad educational program must be carried forward at regional, State and local levels designed to help insure a full understanding of the relative responsibilities of the Federal, State and local governments for food as they will apply in particular areas.

State and local governments should develop plans for a retail food inventory and for the control of retail food distribution in the immediate post-attack period, so as to prevent waste and insure the best use of available food supplies. State and local governments should encourage the maintaining of home and retail stocks and develop plans for mass feeding which will be needed at reception centers and elsewhere.

Plans of USDA take into account the substantial built-in readiness which the Department has as a result of its regular program responsibilities. USDA will proceed to clarify its emergency field organization so that full utilization can be made of the extensive existing staff of the Department at State, county and community levels. Adequate authority will be delegated to appropriate officials of USDA at each of these levels in the pre-emergency period.

Ability to assess the effects of attack on food supplies and food facilities is being developed. To assist in this and related work a card directory of all major food processing and storage facilities is being assembled. It should also be noted that USDA is carrying out an extensive training program for members of the staff who will monitor radiation in event of emergency.

The food program is a direct beneficiary of plans which USDA is preparing for defense against biological and chemical warfare in relation to animals and crops, and defense against fire in rural areas.

Total Food Supplies Will be Adequate

Studies made by the USDA suggest that the overall supply of food will be adequate immediately following any attack on the United States. The main problem will be to transport and distribute food to places of need and assure equitable distribution to all people.

This is a principal reason why large food stockpiles have not been advocated.

It is recognized, however, that families should have their two-weeks' supply, that public shelters should be stocked with food and that some buildup of food stocks not produced in sufficient quantity in the United States may be needed. It is also recognized that there are special food problems for some areas such as Hawaii and Alaska which are particularly vulnerable.

The Commodity Credit Corporation has substantial stocks of agricultural commodities but most of these stocks are not in the form normally used directly for food. On a temporary survival basis, however, these can be used during any immediate post-attack period by such preparation as survivors can give.

Commodity Credit Corporation has a policy to include defense among the criteria used in the location of CCC-owned stocks and storage facilities, but inventories of food commodities owned by CCC other than wheat and cereals are relatively small.

Summary and Reference to Longer-Range Problems

In summary, it is clear that in the event of an attack on the United States USDA, State and local governments, farmers, food processors and distributors and the public all have important food responsibilities in the immediate post-attack period.

It will be necessary for all to cooperate fully if the job of feeding the people is to be accomplished successfully. This cooperative action will be possible only if adequate planning is done in the pre-emergency period and if these plans are fully understood by all concerned before any emergency occurs.

Readiness to carry out the emergency food program is simplified somewhat by the fact that the country is now well-stocked with supplies of many commodities and by the fact that the USDA has a far-reaching field staff of personnel already administering programs which can be used in an emergency with little adaptation.

Although major emphasis has been placed on food problems in the immediate post-attack period, the problems do not stop there. Production, processing, and distribution of food in the longer-range period will necessitate the continued cooperation and best efforts of the Federal, State and local governments; the food industry; and the public. Plans are also being developed to meet these problems.

U. S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL LIBRARY
FEB 3 - 1965
C & R-REF

